A VINDICATION OF THE REASONABLENESS OF Christianity, &c.

A VINDICATION OF THE REASONABLENESS OF Christianity, &c. From Mr. *Edwards's* REFLECTIONS.

[John Locke]

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XUM

A VINDICATION OF THE REASONABLENESS OF Christianity, &c.

MY Book had not been long out, before it fell under the Correction of the Author of a Treatise, Entituled, *Some Thoughts concerning the several Causes and Occasions of Atheism, especially in the present Age.* No contemptible Adversary I'le assure you; since, as it seems, he has got the Faculty to heigthen every thing that displeases him into the Capital Crime of Atheism; And breaths against those who come in his way a

Peſtilential Air, whereby every the leaſt Diſtemper is turned into the Plague, and becomes Mortal. For whoever does not juſt ſay after Mr. *Ed's.* cannot 'tis evident eſcape being an Atheiſt, or a promoter of Atheiſm. I cannot but approve of any ones Zeal to Guard and Secure that great and Fundamental Article of all Religion and Morality, That there is a God: But Atheiſm being a Crime, which for its Madneſs as well as Guilt, ought to ſhut a Man out of all Sober and Civil Society, ſhould be very warily charged on any one by deductions and Conſequences which he himſelf does not own, or at leaſt do not manifeſtly and unavoidably flow from what he aſſerts. This Caution, Charity, I think, obliges us to: And our Author would poſſibly think himſelf hardly dealt with, if, for neglecting ſome of thoſe Rules he himſelf gives, *p.* 31. & 34. againſt Atheiſm, he ſhould be pronounced a promoter of it: As rational a Charge, I imagine, as ſome of thoſe he makes; And as fitly put together, as *the Treatiſe of the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, &c. brought in among the cauſes of Atheiſm. However I ſhall

I shall not much complain of him, since he joyns me, *p.* 104. with no worse Company than two Eminently Pious and Learned * Prelates of our Church, whom he makes favourers of the same *Conceit*, as he calls it. But what has that *Conceit* to do with Atheism? Very much. That *Conceit* is of Kin to *Socinianism*, and *Socinianism* to *Atheism*. Let us hear Mr. *Ed's.* himself. He says, *p.* 113. I am *all over Socinianized*: and therefore my Book fit to be placed among the Causes of Atheism. For in the 64. and following Pages, he endeavours to shew, That *a Socinian is an Atheist, or lest that should seem harsh, one that favours the Cause of Atheism*, *p.* 75. For so he has been pleased to mollifie, now it is published as a Treatise, what was much more harsh, and much more confident in it, when it was Preached as a Sermon. In this abatement he seems a little to comply with his own Advice against his fourth Cause of Atheism; which we have in these words, *pag.* 34. *Wherefore that we may effectually prevent this folly in our selves, let us banish Presumption, Confidence, and*

* Bp. *Taylor*, and the Author of *The Naked Truth*.

Self-conceit; let us extirpate all Pride and Arrogance: Let us not Lift our ſelves in the Number of Capricious Opiniators.

I ſhall leave the *Socinians* themſelves to anſwer his Charge againſt them, and ſhall Examine his Proof of my being a *Socinian*. It ſtands thus, *pag.* 112. *When he* [the Author of the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity, &c.] *proceeds to mention the Advantages and Benefits of Chriſt's coming into the World, and appearing in the Fleſh, he hath not one Syllable of his ſatisfying for us, or by his Death purchaſing Life or Salvation, or any thing that ſounds like it. This and ſeveral other things ſhew that he is all over Socinianized.* Which in effect is, that becauſe I have not ſet down all that this Author perhaps would have done, therefore I am a *Socinian*. But what if I ſhould ſay, I ſet down as much as my Argument required, and yet am no *Socinian*? Would he from my ſilence and omiſſion give me the Lye, and ſay, I am one? Surmizes that may be over-turned by a ſingle denial, are poor Arguments, and ſuch as ſome Men would be aſhamed of

of: At leaſt, if they are to be permitted to Men of this Gentleman's Skill and Zeal, who knows how to make a good uſe of Conjectures, Suſpicions, and Uncharitable Cenſures in the Cauſe of God; yet even there too (if the Cauſe of God can need ſuch Arts) they require a good Memory to keep them from recoiling upon the Author. He might have taken notice of theſe words in my Book, *pag.* 107. 'From 'this eſtate of Death Jeſus CHRIST 'RESTORES all Mankind to Life. And a little lower, 'The Life which 'Jeſus Chriſt reſtores to all Men. And *p.* 205. 'He that hath incurred Death 'for his own Tranſgreſſion, cannot 'LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR 'ANOTHER, as our Saviour pro-'feſſes he did. This methinks SOUNDS SOMETHING LIKE *Chriſt's purchaſing Life for us by his Death.* But this Reverend Gentleman has an Anſwer ready; It was not in the place he would have had it in: It was not where I *mention* the Advantages and Benefits of Chriſt's coming. And therefore, I not having one Syllable of Chriſt's Purchaſing Life and Salvation

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for us by his Death, or any thing that ſounds like it; this, and ſeveral other things that might be offered, ſhew that I am *all over Socinianized.* A very clear and ingenuous Proof, and let him enjoy it.

But what will become of me, that I have not mentioned *Satisfaction!*

Poſſibly this Reverend Gentleman would have had Charity enough for a known Writer of the Brotherhood, to have found it by an *Inuendo* in thoſe words above quoted, of laying down his Life for another. But every thing is to be ſtrained here the other way. For the Author of the *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, &c. is of neceſſity to be repreſented as a *Socinian*; or elſe his Book may be read, and the Truths in it, which Mr. *Ed's.* likes not, be received, and People put upon examining. Thus one, as full of Happy Conjectures and Suſpicions as this Gentleman, might be apt to Argue. But what if the Author deſigned his Treatiſe, as the Title ſhews, chiefly for thoſe who were not yet throughly or firmly Chriſtians; propoſing to work on thoſe who either wholly disbelieved

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or doubted of the truth of the Chriſtian Religion? Would any one blame his Prudence, if he mentioned only thoſe Advantages which all Chriſtians are agreed in? Might he not remember and obſerve that Command of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful diſputations*, without being a *Socinian?* Did he amiſs, that he offered to the belief of thoſe who ſtood off, that, and only that which our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached for the reducing the unconverted World? And would any one think he in earneſt went about to perſwade Men to be Chriſtians, who ſhould uſe that as an Argument to recommend the Goſpel, which he has obſerved Men to lay hold on as an Objection againſt it? To urge ſuch Points of Controverſie as neceſſary Articles of Faith, when we ſee our Saviour and the Apoſtles in their Preaching urged them not as neceſſary to be believed, to make Men Chriſtians, is (by our own Authority) to add Prejudices to Prejudices, and to block up our own way to thoſe Men whom we would have acceſs to, and prevail upon. But ſome

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Men had rather you ſhould write Booty, and croſs your own deſign of removing mens Prejudices to Chriſtianity, than leave out one tittle of what they put into their Syſtems. To ſuch I ſay; Convince but Men of the Miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt; make them but ſee the Truth, Simplicity, and Reaſonableneſs of what he himſelf Taught, and required to be believed by his Followers; and you need not doubt, but, being once fully perſwaded of his Doctrine, and the Advantages which all Chriſtians agree are received by him, ſuch Converts will not lay by the Scriptures; but by a conſtant Reading and Study of them, get all the Light they can from this Divine Revelation; and nouriſh themſelves up in the words of Faith, and of good Doctrin, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks to *Timothy*. But ſome Men will not bear it, that any one ſhould ſpeak of Religion, but according to the Model that they themſelves have made of it. Nay, though he propoſes it upon the very Terms, and in the very Words which our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached it in, yet he ſhall not eſcape Cenſures, and the ſevereſt Inſinua-

Inſinuations. To deviate in the leaſt, or to omit any thing contained in their Articles, is Hereſie under the moſt invidious Names in faſhion, and 'tis well if he eſcapes being a down-right Atheiſt. Whether this be the way for Teachers to make themſelves hearkened to, as Men in earneſt in Religion, and really concerned for the Salvation of mens Souls, I leave them to conſider. What ſucceſs it has had towards perſwading Men of the Truth of Chriſtianity, their own Complaints of the prevalency of Atheiſm on the one hand, and the Number of Deiſts on the other, ſufficiently ſhew.

Another thing laid to my Charge, *p.* 105. & 107. is my *forgetting, or rather wilful omitting ſome plain and obvious Paſſages*, and ſome *Famous Teſtimonies in the Evangeliſts*; namely, *Mat.* 28. 19. *Go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* And *John* 1. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* And verſe 14. *And the Word was made Fleſh.* Mine it ſeems in this Book, are all ſins of Omiſſion.

And

And yet when it came out, the buz, and flutter, and noise which was made, and the Reports which were raised, would have perswaded the World that it subverted all Morality, and was designed against the Christian Religion. I must confess Discourses of this kind, which I met with spread up and down, at first amazed me; knowing the sincerity of those Thoughts which perswaded me to publish it, (not without some hope of doing some Service to decaying Piety, and mistaken and slandered Christianity.) I satisfied my self against those Heats with this assurance, that if there was any thing in my Book, against what any one called Religion, it was not against the Religion contained in the Gospel. And for that I appeal to all Mankind.

But to return to Mr. *Ed's* in particular, I must take leave to tell him, that if omitting *plain and obvious Passages, and famous Testimonies in the Evangelists*, be a fault in me, I wonder why he, among so many of this kind that I am guilty of, mentions so few. For I must acknowledge I have omitted more, nay, many more, that

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are *plain and obvious Passages, and famous Testimonies in the Evangelists*, than those he takes notice of. But if I have left out none of those *Passages or Testimonies* which contain what our Saviour and his Apostles preached, and required assent to, to make men Believers, I shall think my Omissions (let them be what they will) no faults in the present case. What ever Doctrines Mr. *Edwards* would have to be believed, if they are such as our Saviour and his Apostles required to be believed to make a Man a Christian, he will be sure to find them in those Preachings and *Famous Testimonies* of our Saviour and his Apostles that I have quoted. And if they are not there, he may rest satisfied, that they were not proposed by our Saviour and his Apostles, as necessary to be believed, to make Men Christ's Disciples.

If the Omission of other Texts in the Evangelists (which are all true also, and no one of them to be disbelieved) be a fault, it might have been expected that Mr. *Edwards* should have accused me for leaving out *Mat.* 1. 18. to 23. and *Mat.* 17. 24. 35. 50. 60. for

for these are *plain and obvious Passages, and famous Testimonies in the Evangelists*; and such whereon these Articles of the Apostles Creed, *viz. Born of the Virgin* Mary, *suffered under* Pontius Pilate, *was crucified, dead, and buried*, are founded. These being Articles of the Apostles Creed, are look'd upon as *Fundamental Doctrines*: And one would wonder why Mr. *Edwards* so quietly passes by their Omission; did it not appear that he was so intent on fixing his Imputation of *Socinianism* upon me, that rather than miss that, he was content to drop the other Articles of his Creed. For I must observe to him, that if he had blamed me for the Omission of the places last quoted out of St. *Matthew* (as he had as much reason as for any other) it would plainly have appeared how idle and ill-grounded his charging *Socinianism* on me was. But at any rate he was to give the Book an ill Name. Not because it was *Socinian*. For he has no more reason to charge it with *Socinianism* for the Omissions he mentions, than the Apostles Creed. 'Tis therefore well for the Compilers of that Creed, that they

they lived not in Mr. *Edwards*'s days: For he would no doubt have found them *all over Socinianized*, for omitting the Texts he quotes, and the Doctrines he collects out of *Joh.* 1. & *Joh.* 14 *p.* 107, 108. *Socinianiſm* then is not the fault of the Book, whatever elſe it be. For I repeat it again, there is not one word of *Socinianiſm* in it. I that am not ſo good at Conjectures as Mr. *Edwards*, ſhall leave it to him to ſay; or to thoſe who can bear the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the Goſpel, to gueſs, what its fault is.

Some Men are ſhrewd gueſſers, and others would be thought to be ſo: But he muſt be carried far by his forward Inclination, who does not take notice, that the World is apt to think him a Diviner, for any thing rather than for the ſake of Truth, who ſets up his own Suſpicions againſt the direct Evidence of things; and pretends to know other mens Thoughts and Reaſons better than they themſelves. I had ſaid, that the Epiſtles being writ to thoſe who were already Believers, could not be ſuppoſed to be writ to them to

teach them Fundamentals, without which they could not be Believers.

And the Reaſon I gave why I had not gone through the Writings in the Epiſtles, to Collect the Fundamental Articles of Faith, as I had through the Preachings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, was, Becauſe thoſe Fundamental Articles were in thoſe Epiſtles promiſcuouſly, and without diſtinction, mixed with other Truths. And therefore we ſhall find and diſcern thoſe great and neceſſary Points beſt in the Preachings, of our Saviour and the Apoſtles, to thoſe who were yet ignorant of the Faith, and unconverted. This, as far as I know my own thoughts, was the reaſon why I did (as Mr. *Edwards* complains, *p.* 109.) *not proceed to the Epiſtles, and not give an Account of them, as I had done of the Goſpels and Acts.* This I imagined I had in the cloſe of my Book ſo fully and clearly expreſſed, particularly *p.* 125. that I ſuppoſed no body, how willing ſoever, could have miſtaken me. But this Gentleman is ſo much better acquainted with me than I am with my ſelf; ſees ſo deeply into my Heart, and knows

knows ſo perfectly every thing that paſſes there; that he with aſſurance tells the World, *p.* 109. *That I purpoſely omitted the Epiſtolary Writings of the Apoſtles, becauſe they are fraught with other Fundamental Doctrines beſides that one which I mention.* And then he goes on to enumerate thoſe Fundamental Articles, p. 110, 111. viz. *The Corruption and Degeneracy of Humane Nature, with the true Original of it (the Deſection of our firſt Parents) the Propagation of Sin and Mortality, our Reſtoration and Reconciliation by Chriſt's Blood, the Eminency and Excellency of his Prieſthood, the Efficacy of his Death, the full Satisfaction made thereby to Divine Juſtice, and his being made an All ſufficient Sacrifice for Sin. Chriſt's Righteouſneſs, our Juſtification by it, Election, Adoption, Sanctification, Saving Faith, The Nature of the Goſpel, The New Covenant, The Riches of God's Mercy in the way of Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, The certainty of the Reſurrection of Humane Bodies, and of the future Glory.*

Give me leave now to ask you ſeriouſly whether theſe, which you

have here ſet down under the Title of *Fundamental Doctrines*, are ſuch (when reduced to Propoſitions) that every one of them is required to be believed to make a Man a Chriſtian, and ſuch, as without the actual belief thereof, he cannot be ſaved. If they are not ſo every one of them, you may call them *Fundamental Doctrines* as much as you pleaſe, they are not of thoſe Doctrines of Faith I was ſpeaking of, which are only ſuch as are required to be actually believed to make a Man a Chriſtian. If you ſay, ſome of them are ſuch neceſſary Points of Faith, and others not, you by this ſpecious Liſt of well-ſounding, but unexplained terms arbitrarily collected, only make good what I have ſaid, *viz.* That the neceſſary Articles of Faith are in the Epiſtles promiſcuouſly delivered with other Truths, and therefore they cannot be diſtinguiſhed but by ſome other mark than being barely found in the Epiſtles. If you ſay, that they are all of them neceſſary Articles of Faith, I ſhall then deſire you to reduce them to ſo many plain Doctrines, and then prove them to be every

every one of them required to be believed by every Christian Man to make him a Member of the Christian Church. For to begin with the first, 'tis not enough to tell us, as you do, that *the Corruption and Degeneracy of Humane Nature, with the true Original of it, (the Defection of our first Parents) the Propagation of Sin and Mortality, is one of the great Heads of Christian Divinity.* But you are to tell us what are the Propositions we are required to believe concerning this matter: For nothing can be an Article of Faith, but some Proposition; and then it will remain to be proved, that these Articles are necessary to be believed to Salvation. The Apostles Creed was taken, in the first Ages of the Church, to contain all things necessary to Salvation; I mean, necessary to be believed: But you have now better thought on it, and are pleased to enlarge it, and we, no doubt, are bound to submit to your Orthodoxy.

The List of Materials for his Creed (for the Articles are not yet formed) Mr. *Ed's.* closes, *p.* 111. with these words: *These are the Matters of Faith contained in*

in the Epiſtles, and they are Eſſential and Integral parts of the Goſpel it ſelf. What, juſt theſe? Neither more nor leſs? If you are ſure of it, pray let us have them ſpeedily, for the Reconciling of Differences in the Chriſtian Church, which has been ſo cruelly torn about the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, to the great Reproach of Chriſtian Charity, and Scandal of our true Religion.

Mr. *Ed's.* having thus, with two learned Terms *of Eſſential and Integral* Parts, ſufficiently proved the Matter in Queſtion, *viz.* That all thoſe, he has ſet down, are Articles of Faith neceſſary to be believed to make a Man a Chriſtian, he grows warm at my omiſſion of them. This I cannot complain of as unnatural: The Spirit of Creed-making always ariſing from an heat of Zeal for our own Opinions, and warm Endeavours, by all ways poſſible to decry and bear down thoſe who differ in a tittle from us. What then could I expect more gentle and candid, than what Mr. *Ed's.* has ſubjoyned in theſe words? *And therefore it is no wonder, that our Author, being ſenſible of this*

(*viz.*

(*viz*, That the Points he has named were *Eſſential and Integral parts of the Goſpel*) *would not vouchſafe to give us an Abſtract of thoſe inſpired Writings* [*the Epiſtles*] *but paſſes them by with ſome Contempt*. Sir, when your Angry Fit is over, and the abatement of your Paſſion has given way to the return of your Sincerity, I ſhall beg you to read this paſſage in 297 *pag.* of my Book. 'Theſe Holy Writers (*viz.* the Pen-'men of the Scriptures) INSPIRED 'from above, writ nothing but Truth, 'and in moſt places very weighty 'Truths to us now, for the expound-'ing, clearing, and confirming of the 'Chriſtian Doctrine; and eſtabliſhing 'thoſe in it who had embraced it. And again, *pag.* 299. 'The other parts of 'DIVINE REVELATION are 'Objects of Faith, and are ſo to be 'received. They are Truths, of which 'none that is once known to be ſuch, '*i.e.* revealed, may or ought to be 'disbelieved. And if this does not ſatisfie you that I have as high a Veneration for the Epiſtles, as you or any one can have, I require you to publiſh to the World thoſe paſſages which

ſhew

ſhew my *Contempt* of them. In the mean time I ſhall deſire my Reader to examine what I have writ concerning the Epiſtles, which is all contained between *p.* 290 and 301 of my Book; And then to Judge, whether I have made bold with the Epiſtles in what I have ſaid of them, or this Gentleman made bold with Truth in what he has writ of me. Humane Frailty will not, I ſee, eaſily quit its hold; What it loſes in one part, it will be ready to regain in another; and not be hindred from taking Reprizals, even on the moſt Priviledged ſort of Men. Mr. *Ed's.* who is entrenched in Orthodoxy, and ſo is as ſafe in Matters of Faith almoſt as Infallibility it ſelf, is yet as apt to Err as others in Matter of Fact.

But he has not yet done with me about the Epiſtles: All his fine Draught of my ſlighting that part of the Scripture will be loſt, unleſs the laſt ſtrokes compleat it into *Socinianiſm.* In his following words you have the Concluſion of the whole Matter. His words are theſe. *And more eſpecially, if I may Conjecture,* (by all means, Sir; Conjecturing is your proper Talent; you

you have hitherto done nothing elſe; And I will ſay that for you, you have a lucky Hand at it.) *He doth this, (i. e. paſs by the Epiſtles with Contempt) becauſe he knew that there are ſo many and frequent, and thoſe ſo illuſtrious and eminent Atteſtations to the Doctrine of the ever to be adored Trinity, in theſe Epiſtles.* Truly, Sir, if you will permit me to know what I know, as well as you do allow your ſelf to conjecture what you pleaſe, you are out for this once. The Reaſon why I went not through the Epiſtles, as I did the Goſpels and the *Acts*, was that very Reaſon I printed, and that will be found ſo ſufficient a one to all conſiderate Readers, that I believe they will think you need not ſtrain your Conjectures for another. And if you think it be ſo eaſie to diſtinguiſh Fundamentals from not Fundamentals in the Epiſtles, I deſire you to try your Skill again, in giving the World a perfect Collection of Propoſitions out of the Epiſtles, that contain all that is required, and no more than what is abſolutely required to be believed by all Chriſtians, without

which Faith they cannot be of Christ's Church. For I tell you, notwithstanding the shew you have made, you have not yet done it, nor will you affirm that you have.

His next Page, *viz.* 112. is made up of the same, which he calls, Not Uncharitable Conjectures. *I expound*, he says, *John* 14. 9. &c. *after the Antitrinitarian Mode*: And I make Christ *and Adam to be Sons of God, in the same sense, and by their Birth, as the Racovians generally do.* I know not but it may be true, that the *Antitrinitarians and Racovians* understand those places as I do: But 'tis more than I know that they do so. I took not my sense of those Texts from those Writers, but from the Scripture it self, giving Light to it's own meaning, by one place compared with another: What in this way appears to me its true meaning, I shall not decline, because I am told, that it is so understood by the *Racovians*, whom I never yet read; nor embrace the contrary, though *the generality of Divines* I more converse with, should declare for it. If the sense wherein I understand those

Texts

Texts be a mistake, I shall be beholding to you if you will set me right. But they are not Popular Authorities, or Frightful Names, whereby I judge of Truth or Falshood. You will now no doubt applaud your Conjectures; The Point is gained, and I am openly a *Socinian*, since I will not disown that I think the *Son of God* was a Phrase that among the *Jews* in our Saviour's time was used for the *Messiah*, though the *Socinians* understand it in the same sense; And therefore I must certainly be of their Perswasion in every thing else. I admire the acuteness, force, and fairness of your Reasoning, and so I leave you to Triumph in your *Conjectures*. Only I must desire you to take notice, that that Ornament of our Church, and every way Eminent Prelate, the late Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, understood that Phrase in the same sense that I do, without being a *Socinian*. You may read what he says concerning *Nathanael*, in his first *Serm. of Sincerity*, published this year. His words are these, *p.* 4. *And being satisfied that he* [our Saviour] *was the Messiah, he presently owned him for such,*

calling him the SON OF GOD, and the King of Israel.

Though this Gentleman know my Thoughts as perfectly as if he had for several years past lain in my Bosom, yet he is mightily at a loss about my Person: As if it at all concerned the Truth contained in my Book, what Hand it came from. However the Gentleman is mightily perplexed about the Author. Why, Sir? What if it were writ by a Scribler of *Bartholomew* Fair Drolls, with all that flourish of Declamatory Rhetorick, and all that smartness of Wit and Jest about *Capt. Tom, Unitarians, Units, and Cyphers*, &c. Which are to be found between 115 and 123 Pages of a Book that came out during the merry time of Rope-Dancing, and Puppet-Plays? What is Truth, would, I hope, nevertheless be Truth in it, however odly spruſed up by such an Author: Though perhaps 'tis likely some would be apt to say, such Merriment became not the Gravity of my Subject, and that I writ not in the stile of a Graduate in Divinity. I confess, (as Mr. *Ed's.* rightly says) my fault lyes on the other side,

ſide, in a want of *Vivacity and Elevation*: And I cannot wonder that one of his Character and Palate, ſhould find out and complain of my *flatneſs*, which has ſo over-charged my Book with plain and direct Texts of Scripture in a matter capable of no other Proofs. But yet I muſt acknowledge his exceſs of Civility to me; He ſhews me more kindneſs than I could expect or wiſh, ſince he prefers what I ſay to him my ſelf, to what is offered to him from the Word of God; and makes me this Complement, that I begin to mend, about the Cloſe; *i. e.* when I leave off quoting of Scripture: And the dull work was done, of *going through the Hiſtory of the Evangeliſts and Acts*, which he computes, *p.* 105. to take up three quarters of my Book. Does not all this deſerve at leaſt that I ſhould in return take ſome care of his Credit? Which I know not how better to do, than by entreating him, that when he takes next in hand ſuch a Subject as this is, wherein the Salvation of Souls is concerned, he would treat it a little more ſeriouſly, and with a little more Candor; leſt Men ſhould find in his Writings

tings another cauſe of Atheiſm, which in this Treatiſe he has not thought fit, to mention. *Oſtentation of Wit* in general he has made a *Cauſe of Atheiſm* p. 28. But the World will tell him, That frothy light Diſcourſes concerning the Serious Matters of Religion; and *Oſtentation* of trifling and misbecoming *Wit* in thoſe who come as Ambaſſadors from God, under the Title of Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, in the great Commiſſion of the Goſpel, is none of the leaſt Cauſes of Atheiſm.

Some Men have ſo peculiar a way of Arguing, that one may ſee it influences them in the repeating another Man's Reaſoning, and ſeldom fails to make it their own. In the next Paragraph I find theſe words: *What makes him contend for one ſingle Article, with the excluſion of all the reſt? He pretends it is this, That all Men ought to underſtand their Religion.* This, I confeſs, is a Reaſoning I did not think of; nor would it hardly, I fear, have been uſed but by one, who had firſt took up his Opinion from the Recommendation of Faſhion or Intereſt, and then ſought Topicks to make it good. Perhaps the defe-

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rence due to your Character excuſed you from the trouble of quoting the Page where *I pretend*, as you ſay; and it is ſo little like my way of Reaſoning, that I ſhall not look for it in a Book where I remember nothing of it, and where, without your Direction, I fear the Reader will ſcarce find it. Though I have not *that vivacity of Thought, that elevation of Mind*, which Mr. *Ed's.* demands, yet common ſenſe would have kept me from contending that there is but one Article, becauſe all Men ought to underſtand their Religion. Numbers of Propoſitions may be harder to be remembred, but 'tis the abſtruſeneſs of the Notions, or obſcurity, inconſiſtency, or doubtfulneſs of the Terms or Expreſſions that makes them hard to be underſtood: And one ſingle Propoſition may more perplex the Underſtanding than twenty other. But where did you find *I contended for one ſingle Article*, ſo as to *exclude all the reſt?* You might have remembred, that I ſay, *p.* 44. That the Article of the One only true God, was alſo neceſſary to be believed. This might have ſatisfied

tisfied you, that I did not ſo *contend for one* Article of Faith, as to be *at defiance* with more than one. However you inſiſt on the word *one* with great vigour, from *p.* 108. to 121. And you did well, you had elſe loſt all the force of that killing ſtroke, reſerved for the Cloſe, in that ſharp Jeſt of *Unitarians*, and a clinch or two more of great moment.

Having found by a careful peruſal of the Preachings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that the Religion they propoſed, conſiſted in that ſhort, plain, eaſie, and intelligible Summary which I ſet down, *p.* 301. in theſe words: 'Believing Jeſus to be the Saviour promiſed, and taking him now raiſed 'from the Dead, and conſtituted the 'Lord and Judge of Men, to be their 'King and Ruler. I could not forbear magnifying the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God (which infinitely exceeds the thoughts of ignorant, vain, and narrow-minded Man) in theſe following words. 'The All-Merciful God ſeems 'herein to have conſulted the Poor of 'this World, and the Bulk of Mankind: THESE ARE ARTICLES 'that

'that the Labouring and Illiterate Man 'may comprehend. Having thus plainly mentioned more than one Article, I might have taken it amiss, that Mr. *Ed's.* should be at so much pains as he is, to blame me for *contending for one* Article; because I thought more than *one* could not be understood; had he not had many fine things to say in his declamation upon *one* Article, which affords him so much Matter, that less than seven pages could not hold it. Only here and there, as Men of Oratory often do, he mistakes the business, as *p.* 115. where he says, *I urge, that there must be nothing in Christianity that is not plain and exactly levelled to all mens Mother Wit.* I desire to know where I said so, or that *the very manner of every thing in Christianity must be clear and intelligible, every thing must be presently comprehended by the weakest Noddle, or else it's no part of Religion, especially of Christianity*; As he has it, *p.* 119. I am sure it is not in *pag.* 255. 289. 292. of my Book: These, therefore to convince him that I am of another Opinion, I shall desire some body to read to Mr. *Edwards*: For he himself

reads my Book with ſuch Spectacles, as make him find Meanings and Words in it, neither of which I put there. He ſhould have remembred, that I ſpeak not of all the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, nor all that is publiſhed to the World in it; but of thoſe Truths only, which are abſolutely required to be believed to make any one a Chriſtian. And theſe I find are ſo plain and eaſie, that I ſee no Reaſon why every body, with me, ſhould not Magnifie the Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of the Almighty; who having out of his free Grace propoſed a new Law of Faith to ſinful and loſt Man, hath by that Law required no harder terms, nothing as abſolutely neceſſary to be believed, but what is ſuited to Vulgar Capacities, and the Comprehenſion of Illiterate Men.

You are a little out again, *p.* 118. where you Ironically ſay, as if it were my ſenſe, *Let us have but one Article, though it be with defiance to all the reſt.* Jeſting apart, Sir. This is a ſerious Truth, That what our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached, and admitted Men into the Church for belie-

believing, is all that is absolutely required to make a Man a Christian. But this is without any *Defiance of all the rest*, taught in the Word of God. This excludes not the belief of any one of those many other Truths contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which it is the Duty of every Christian to study, and thereby build himself up on our most Holy Faith; receiving with stedfast Belief, and ready Obedience all those things which the Spirit of Truth hath therein revealed. But that *all the rest* of the inspired Writings, or, if you please, *Articles, are of equal necessity* to be believed to make a Man a Christian, with what was preached by our Saviour and his Apostles; that I deny. A Man, as I have shewn, may be a Christian and a Believer without actually believing them; Because those whom our Saviour and his Apostles, by their Preaching and Discourses, converted to the Faith, were made Christians and Believers barely upon the receiving what they preached to them.

I hope it is no derogation to the Christian Religion, to say, that the Fundamentals of it, *i. e.* all that is necessary to be believed in it by all Men, is easie to be understood by all Men. This I thought my self authorized to say by the very easie, and very intelligible Articles insisted on by our Saviour and his Apostles, which contain nothing but what could be understood by the *bulk of Mankind*; a Term which, I know not why, Mr. *Ed's.* p. 117. is offended at, and thereupon is, after his fashion, sharp upon me about Captain *Tom* and his *Myrmidons*, for whom he tells me I am *going to make a Religion.* The making of Religions and Creeds I leave to others. I only set down the Christian Religion, as I find our Saviour and his Apostles preached it, and preached it to, and left it for the *Ignorant and unlearned Multitude.* For I hope you do not think, how contemptibly soever you speak of *the Venerable Mob*, as you are pleased to dignifie them, *p.* 117. that the Bulk of Mankind, or in your Phrase, the *Rabble*, are

are not concerned in Religion, or ought not to understand it, in order to their Salvation. Nor are you, I hope, acquainted with any, who are of that *Muscovite* Divine's Mind, who to one, that was talking to him about Religion, and the other World, replyed, That for the *Czar* indeed, and *Bojars*, they might be permitted to raise their hopes to Heaven; But that for such Poor Wretches as he, they were not to think of Salvation.

I remember the *Pharisees* treated the Common People with Contempt, and said, *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this People, who knoweth not the Law, are cursed.* But yet these, who in the Censure of the *Pharisees* were cursed, were some of the *Poor*, or if you please to have it so, the *Mobb*, to whom the *Gospel was preached* by our Saviour, as he tells *John*'s Disciples, *Matth.* XI. 5.

Pardon me, Sir, that I have here laid these Examples and Considerations before you; a little to prevail with you, not to let loose such a Torrent of Wit and Eloquence against

against the *Bulk of Mankind* another time; and that for a meer Fancy of your own: For I do not see how they here came in your way; but that you were resolved to set up something to have a fling at, and shew your Parts, in what you call your *Different* * *Strain*, though besides the purpose. I know no body was going to *ask the Mob what you must believe*? And as for me, I suppose you will take my word for it, that I think no *Mob*, (no, not your *Venerable Mob*) is to be asked, what I am to believe; Nor that *Articles of Faith* are to be *received by the Vote of Club-men*, or any other sort of Men you will name instead of them.

* Preface.

In the following words, *pag.* 115. you ask, *Whether a Man may not understand those Articles of Faith which you mentioned out of the Gospels and Epistles, if they be explained to him, as well as that one I speak of?* 'Tis as the Articles are, and as they are explained. There are Articles that have been some Hundreds of Years explaining; Which, there are many, and those not of the most illiterate, who profess,

profess, they do not yet understand. And to instance in no other but *He descended into Hell*, tho learned are not yet agreed in the sense of it, tho' great pains has been taken to explain it.

Next, I ask, who are to explain your Articles? The Papists will explain some of them one way, and the Reformed another. The Remonstrants and Anti-Remonstrants give them different senses. And probably the *Trinitarians* and *Unitarians* will profess, that they understand not each others explications. And at last, I think it may be doubted whether any Articles, which need mens Explications, can be so clearly and certainly understood, as one which is made so very plain by the Scripture it self, as not to need any Explication at all. Such is this, That Jesus is the *Messiah*. For though you learnedly tell us, that *Messiah* is a Hebrew word, and no better understood by the Vulgar than *Arabick*; Yet I guess it is so fully explained in the New Testament, and in those places I have quoted out of it, that

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no body, who can understand any ordinary Sentence in the Scripture, can be at a loss about it: And 'tis plain it needs no other Explication than what our Saviour and the Apostles gave it in their Preaching; for as they preached it men received it, and that sufficed to make them Believers.

To conclude, when I heard that this Learned Gentleman, who had a Name for his study of the Scriptures, and Writings on them, had done me the Honour to consider my Treatise, I promised my self, that his Degree, Calling, and Fame in the World, would have secured to me something of weight in his Remarques, which might have convinced me of my Mistakes; and if he had found any in it, justified my quitting of them. But having examined what in his concerns my Book, I, to my wonder, find, that he has only taken pains to give it an ill Name; without so much as attempting to refute any one Position in it, how much soever he is pleased to make a noise against several Propositions; which he might be free with, because they

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are his own: And I have no reaſon to take it amiſs, if he has ſhewn his Zeal and Skill againſt them. He has been ſo favourable to what is mine, as not to uſe any one Argument againſt any Paſſage in my Book. This, which I take for a Publick Teſtimony of his Approbation, I ſhall return him my Thanks for, when I know whether I owe it to his Miſtake, Conviction, or Kindneſs. But if he writ only for his Bookſeller's ſake, he alone ought to thank him.

AFter the foregoing Papers were ſent to the Preſs, The *Witneſſes to Chriſtianity*, of the Reverend and Learned Dr. *Patrick*, now Lord Biſhop of *Ely*, fell into my hands. I regretted the not having ſeen it before I writ my Treatiſe of the *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, &c. I ſhould then poſſibly, by the Light given me by ſo good a Guide, and ſo great a Man, with more confidence directly have fallen into the knowledge of Chriſtianity; which in the way I ſought it, in its ſource, required the comparing

of Texts with Texts, and the more than once reading over the Evangeliſts and *Acts*, beſides other parts of Scripture. But I had the ill luck not to ſee that Treatiſe till ſo few hours ſince, that I have had time only to read as far as the end of the Introduction, or firſt Chapter: And there Mr. *Ed's.* may find, that this Pious Biſhop (whoſe Writings ſhew he Studies, as well as his Life that he believes the Scriptures) owns what Mr. *Ed's.* is pleaſed to call *a plauſible Conceit*, which, he ſays, *I give over and over again in theſe formal words*, viz. *That nothing is required to be believed by any Chriſtian Man but this, That Jeſus is the Meſſiah.*

The Liberty Mr. *Ed's.* takes in other places deſerves not it ſhould be taken upon his word, *that theſe formal words* are to be found *over and over again* in my Book, unleſs he had quoted the Pages. But I will ſet him down the *formal words* which are to be found in this Reverend Prelate's Book, *p.* 14. *To be the Son of God, and to be Chriſt, being but different expreſſions of the*

the ſame thing. And *p.* 10. *It is the very ſame thing to believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, and to believe that Jeſus is the Son of God; Expreſs it how you pleaſe. This ALONE is the Faith which can regenerate a Man, and put a Divine Spirit into him; that is, makes him a Conquerour over the World, as Jeſus was.* I have quoted only theſe few words; but Mr. *Ed's.* if he pleaſes, or any body elſe, may, in this firſt Chapter, ſatisfie himſelf more fully, that the Deſign of it is to ſhew, that in our Saviour's time, *Son of God* was a known and received Name or Appellation of the *Meſſiah*, and ſo uſed in the Holy Writers. And that the Faith that was to make Men Chriſtians, was only the believing that *Jeſus is the Meſſiah.* 'Tis to the truth of this Propoſition that he *examines his Witneſſes*, as he ſpeaks, *pag.* 21. And this, if I miſtake not, in his Epiſt. Dedicatory he calls *Chriſtianity. Fol. A.* 3. where he calls them *Witneſſes to Chriſtianity.* But theſe two Propoſitions, *viz.* That *SON of God* in the Goſpel ſtands for *Meſſiah*; And that the Faith which

alone makes Men Chriſtians, is the believing *Jeſus to be the Meſſiah*; diſpleaſes Mr. *Ed's.* ſo much in my Book, that he thinks himſelf Authorized from them to charge me with *Socinianiſm*, and want of Sincerity. How he will be pleaſed to treat this Reverend Prelate whileſt he is alive (for the Dead may with good Manners be made bold with) muſt be left to his deciſive Authority. This I am ſure, which way ſoever he determine, he muſt for the future either afford me more good Company, or fairer Quarter.

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